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Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/9. It assesses progress in the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and in mainstreaming gender in the operational activities of the United Nations development system.

It draws on information from United Nations entities reporting under the System-wide Action Plan, the strategic summaries of coordination results of the United Nations Development Group, the information management system of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Office and secondary sources. Recommendations are offered for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2018 on ways to support integrated and accelerated joint action on gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of the United Nations system within the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2017/9, requested that I submit a report to the Council at its 2018 session on the implementation of the resolution, including on progress made in the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The present report responds to that request.

2. Section II of the present report highlights intergovernmental and system-wide advances on gender equality and the empowerment of women in 2017; section III reports on progress on the implementation of the System-wide Action Plan, including lessons learned; section IV examines progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective into operational activities; section V highlights gaps and challenges; and section VI concludes with recommendations for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council.

3. The present report analysed data provided by 66 United Nations entities reporting under the System-wide Action Plan, the United Nations Development Group's strategic summaries of coordination results for 2017 and 2018 for 131 United Nations country teams and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Office information management system.[1] It also reviewed relevant secondary sources.

II. Advancing the gender equality agenda

4. As Secretary-General, I have taken several steps to further strengthen the infrastructure of the United Nations system to better deliver on gender equality and the empowerment of women. I have requested deeper expert analysis of how United Nations instruments, in particular budget planning and results management, can better support gender mainstreaming efforts. I am establishing a high-level task force on financing for gender equality and women's empowerment to tackle the issue of financing for gender equality within the United Nations system. In addition, I have called on all the heads of entities to serve as gender champions by making tangible commitments. Recognizing gender parity as an urgent priority, I launched my system-wide strategy on gender parity in September 2017, with the goal of achieving parity at senior levels of leadership by 2021, and ultimately across the system, at all levels by 2028. To ensure zero tolerance for sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, I have created mechanisms to address those grave complaints.

5. In 2017, intergovernmental bodies, including the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, continued to provide normative guidance on gender mainstreaming, gender equality and the empowerment of women. The agreed conclusions of the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women led to new commitments for eliminating barriers to women's empowerment in the changing world of work, including through implementing conducive economic and social policies, addressing the growing informality of women's work and mobility and managing technological and digital change and enhancing the role of the private sector for women's economic empowerment.

6. During the high-level political forum on sustainable development, participating countries highlighted specific measures to integrate gender equality perspectives into

[1] Information provided in the United Nations Development Group's strategic summaries of coordination results for 2017 and 2018 reflect the progress and outcomes of the activities/interventions of 131 United Nations country teams in 2016 and 2017. An analysis of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Office's information management system data for 2018 was not included as it had not been validated at the time of writing.

policymaking, including gender-responsive budgeting. The resulting ministerial declaration (E/HLS/2017/1) gave added emphasis to Sustainable Development Goal 5 as a catalyst of progress for the achievement of all the Goals and targets, especially the mutually reinforcing linkages between the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the eradication of poverty.

7. In 2017, in its resolution 72/234, the General Assembly called upon the entities of the United Nations system to mainstream a gender perspective and to pursue gender equality in country programmes, planning instruments, investment frameworks and sector-wide programmes and in accordance with national development strategies.

8. During the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification gender action plans were adopted for the first time. The gender action plan of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change provides a clear road map for Member States to advance women's full, equal and meaningful participation as a precondition and solution for gender-responsive climate action. The gender action plan of the Convention to Combat Desertification supports gender mainstreaming in the implementation of its 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

9. The Spotlight Initiative, a global, multi-year, €500 million investment spearheaded by the European Union and the United Nations, places the elimination of violence against women at the centre of efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and as a key driver of progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a model for Sustainable Development Goal funds, the Initiative reflects an innovative approach for catalysing an enhanced, joint United Nations response to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

III. Promoting system-wide accountability for gender mainstreaming in the entities of the United Nations system

10. In 2017, 66 entities (94 per cent of United Nations entities, corresponding to over 99 per cent of the United Nations budget) reported under the System-wide Action Plan, including the Secretariat and its departments and offices.[2] Participation and reporting on the System-wide Action Plan has steadily increased from a baseline of 55 entities in 2012, reflecting the acceptance of the System-wide Action Plan as an effective system-wide accountability mechanism.

11. 2017 constituted the final year of reporting under the first phase of implementation of the System-wide Action Plan. Since its introduction in 2012, the System-wide Action Plan has facilitated significant and sustained improvement in the Organization's performance with regard to mainstreaming gender equality. The percentage of ratings meeting or exceeding requirements more than doubled from 2012 to 2017, from 31 to 65 per cent (see figure I). Gains can be attributed to system-wide ownership of the System-wide Action Plan, the leadership of senior management, coordination, networking, capacity development and facilitation by United Nations networks.

12. However, the United Nations system fell short of meeting all requirements by 36 percentage points. Persistent structural areas of weakness, related in particular to

[2] Non-reporting entities included the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

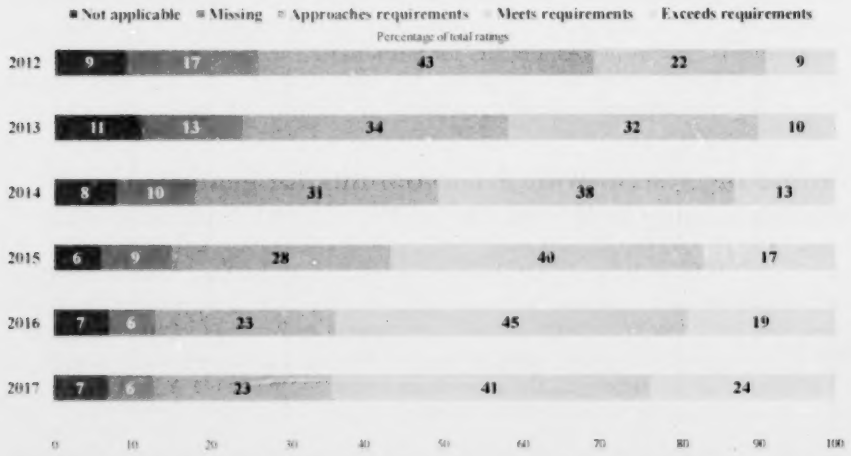
gender architecture [3] and parity, resource allocation and capacity assessment, prevented the United Nations system from advancing sufficiently, and requires increased attention from senior leadership.

13. Sustained commitment and a sharper focus are needed during the second phase of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (System-wide Action Plan 2.0), under which reporting will take place from 2019 onward. The updated System-wide Action Plan offers the United Nations a platform to fulfil its commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women, build on the considerable advances made and address areas of persistent weakness.

A. Comparative analysis of overall United Nations system performance, 2012–2017

14. To assess performance trends, the report compares results by year, performance indicator and type of entity[4] and highlights areas of strengths and improvement.

Figure I
Comparative analysis of overall ratings for the United Nations system, 2012–2017



Note: Calculations for the United Nations system are based on 990 individual ratings, derived from 66 entities reporting on 15 performance indicators.

15. Overall, system-wide performance in 2017 remained consistent with that of 2016, with 65 per cent of all ratings falling into the "meets requirements" or "exceeds requirements" category, up 1 percentage point from 2016.

16. Differentiating the "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements" categories, however, reveals significant progress. In 2017, 24 per cent of all indicators fell in the "exceeds requirements" category, an increase of 5 percentage points over 2016 and 16 percentage points over 2012. Effective leadership and extensive

[3] See www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap/un-swap-technical-notes.pdf?la=en.

[4] Entities were grouped into categories based on the standard United Nations organizational breakdown: funds and programmes, the Secretariat, specialized entities, technical entities and research and training institutes.

networking, coordination and inter-agency learning and support, involving inter-agency networks and staff from strategic planning, human resources and evaluation and auditing, among others, contributed to those system-wide advances.

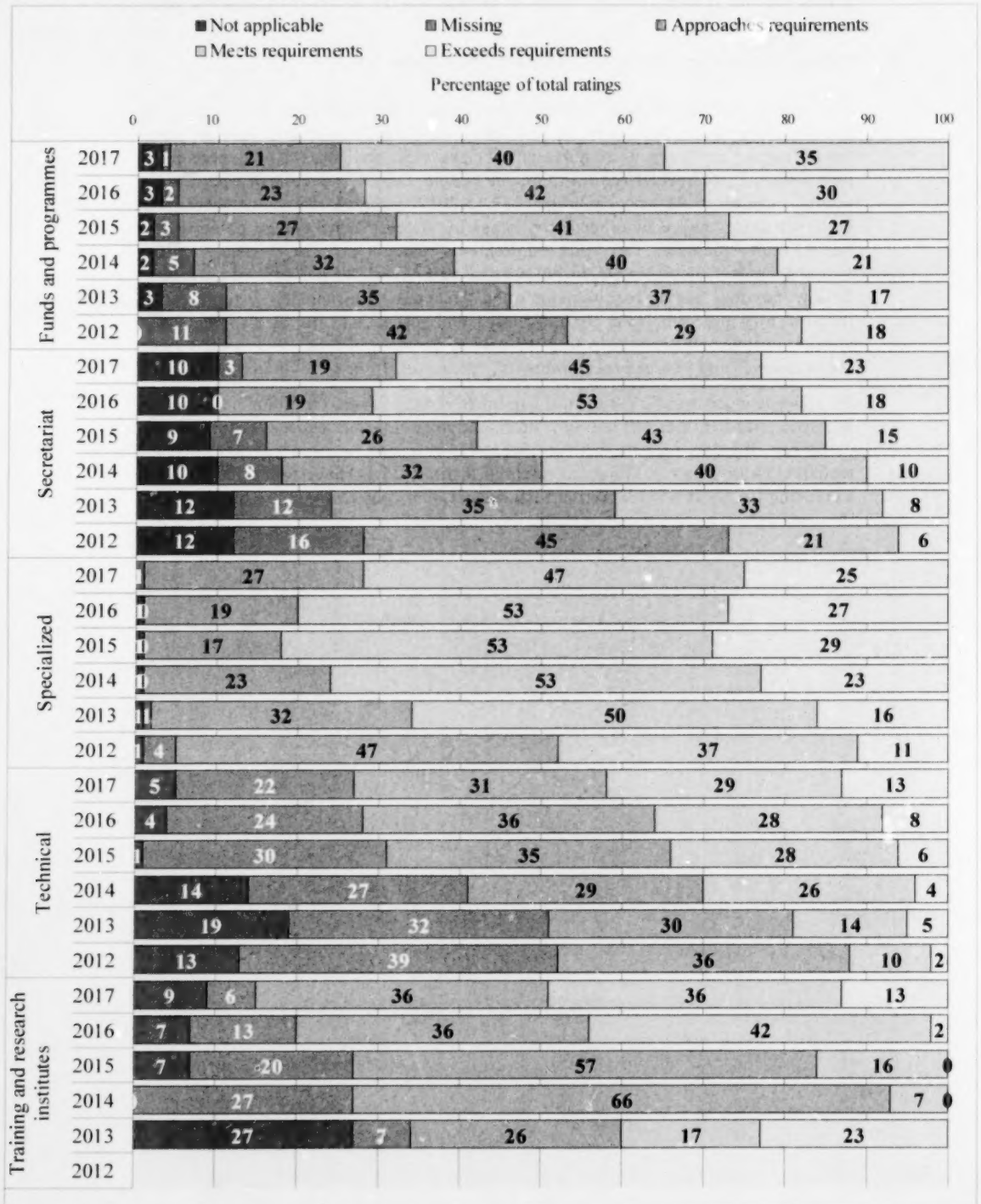
B. Comparative analysis, by clusters, of entity types

17. Funds and programmes collectively registered the highest performance of all entity clusters (see figure II). In 2017, 75 per cent of their ratings fell into the "meets requirements" or "exceeds requirements" categories, an increase of 3 percentage points since 2016. Specialized entities came second. Despite a decline of 8 percentage points, from 80 to 72 per cent from 2016 to 2017, the performance of specialized entities remains ahead of other entity types by at least 4 percentage points in the "meets requirements" or "exceeds requirements" categories.[5] The cluster of entities with a technical focus registered noteworthy gains, with 42 per cent of all ratings falling into the "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements" categories: an increase of 6 per cent from 2016. Training and research institutes also registered steady improvement from 2016 to 2017 with an increase of 5 per cent in the "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements" categories, from 44 to 49 per cent.

18. While more than 70 per cent of combined ratings for the funds and programmes and specialized entities fell into the "meets requirements" or "exceeds requirements" categories, the data suggest that significant effort is still required to ensure that the technical entities and training and research institutes, who have found meeting and exceeding the System-wide Action Plan requirements challenging, are on a par with the rest of the United Nations system.

[5] The decline is due to stronger adherence to performance requirements, particularly in cases of assigning an "exceeds requirements" rating.

Figure II
Comparative analysis of ratings, by year and entity type



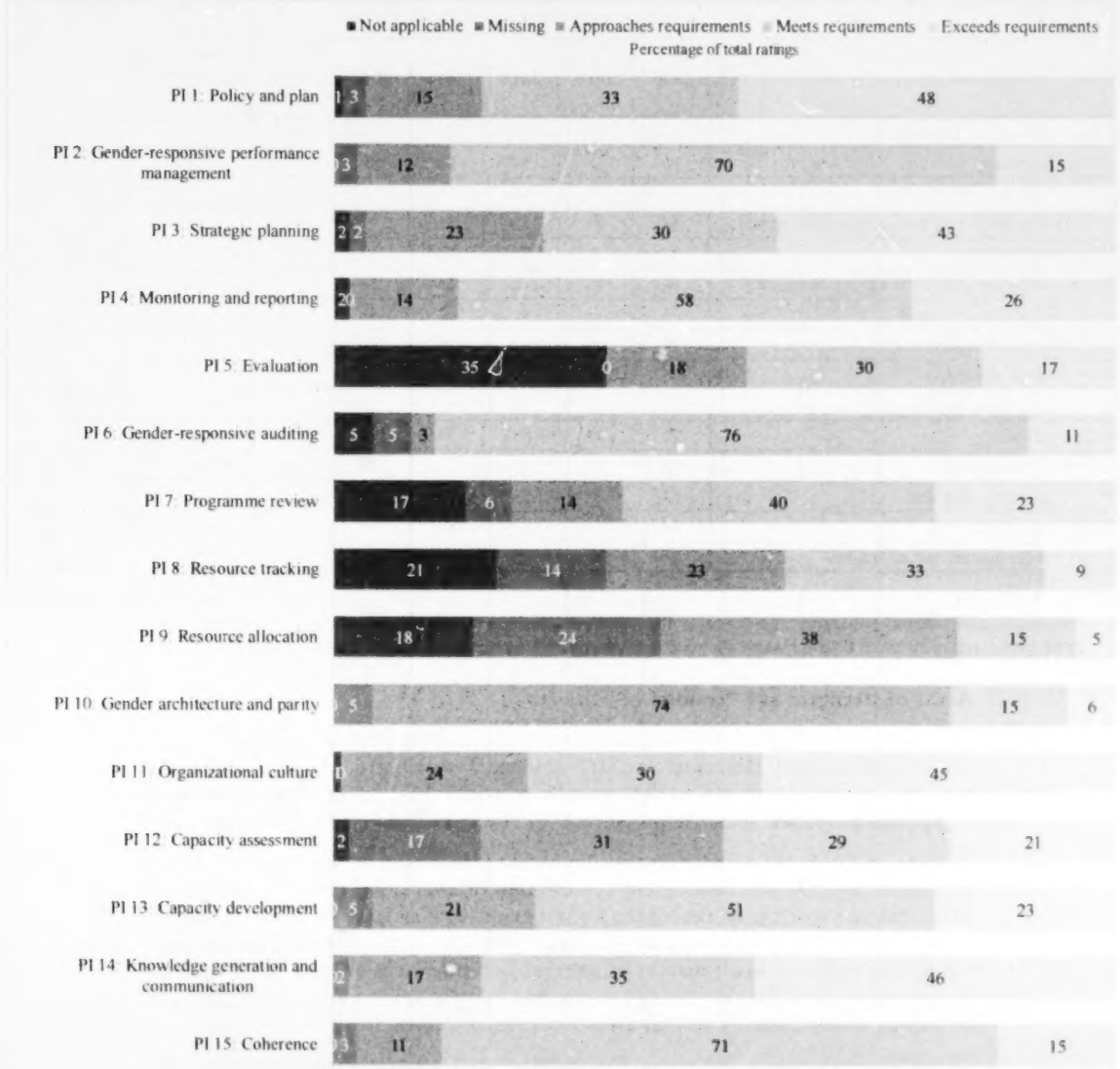
Note: No entities in the category of Training and research institutes reported data for 2012.

C. Comparative analysis by performance indicator: strengths and areas for improvement

19. Figure III provides a breakdown of ratings for all entities by performance indicator for 2017. Figure IV presents a comparison of "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements" ratings, by indicator, for the period 2012–2017.

Figure III

Analysis of ratings for the United Nations system, by performance indicator, 2017



20. In 2017, four indicators, namely Policy and plan, Strategic planning, Organizational culture and Knowledge generation and communication, registered the

largest proportion of "exceeds requirements" ratings, with at least 43 per cent of entities[6] exceeding requirements for each. Analysis reveals that those indicators constitute drivers of change and catalyse overall entity performance by producing a cascade effect in other indicators.

Figure IV
Comparative analysis of "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements" ratings by indicator, 2012–2017

Performance indicator, ranked by 2017 performance	Percentage of total ratings meeting or exceeding requirements (not applicable omitted)						Percentage point difference (2017–2016)	Percentage point difference (2017–2012)
	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012		
PI 6: Gender-responsive auditing	92	90	83	78	69	13	2	79
PI 15: Coherence	86	88	89	87	89	77	(2)	9
PI 4: Monitoring and reporting	86	81	68	65	50	39	5	47
PI 2: Gender-responsive performance management	85	85	83	81	75	59	0	26
PI 1: Policy and plan	82	78	73	61	50	40	4	42
PI 14: Knowledge generation and communication	82	86	72	66	52	34	(4)	48
PI 11: Organizational culture	76	75	69	63	59	48	1	28
PI 7: Programme review	76	76	63	59	47	31	0	45
PI 3: Strategic planning	75	75	73	74	58	41	0	34
PI 13: Capacity development	74	74	53	40	25	23	0	51
PI 5: Evaluation	72	58	55	50	44	36	14	36
PI 8: Resource tracking	54	50	39	30	25	22	4	32
PI 12: Capacity assessment	51	49	33	28	23	15	2	36
PI 9: Resource allocation	24	22	22	18	13	7	2	17
PI 10: Gender architecture and parity	21	25	22	21	20	13	(4)	8

Note: In order to present strengths and areas for improvement more accurately, percentages in figure IV were calculated omitting "not applicable" ratings. Therefore, percentages for "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirement" will differ slightly from those presented in figure III, which shows percentages based on all ratings, "not applicable" included.

Areas of strength: 2017 results

21. Figure IV indicates that the United Nations system registered progress for 8 of the 15 performance indicators in 2017 compared with 2016. Progress remained consistent for an additional four indicators from 2016 to 2017, all of which maintained 74 per cent or higher "meets requirements" or "exceeds requirements" ratings.

22. As in 2016, the Gender-responsive auditing indicator outperformed all other indicators, with 92 per cent of entities meeting or exceeding requirements. Since 2012, that indicator has witnessed the highest gains, with an increase of 79 percentage points in the "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements" categories.[7] Leadership by the Representatives of Internal Audit Services of the United Nations Organizations and the increasing recognition of the key role auditing plays in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women drove performance.

23. The performance indicators for Coherence, Monitoring and reporting and Gender-responsive performance management maintained past impressive gains. Of

[6] Of 66 entities, 32 exceeded the Policy and plan indicator, 31 exceeded the Knowledge generation indicator, 30 exceeded the Organizational culture indicator and 29 exceeded the Strategic planning indicator.

[7] Seven entities in 2012 compared with 58 entities in 2017.

the reporting entities, 85 per cent (56) now include gender equality and the empowerment of women as a factor in performance assessment, up from 59 per cent (32) in 2012. Currently, 86 per cent of entities (56)[8] regularly report on performance on gender equality and empowerment of women, up from 39 per cent (19) in 2012. Those improvements demonstrate the dedication and engagement of human resources and strategic planning and reporting offices.

Progress between the previous and current reporting periods: 2016–2017

24. From 2016 to 2017 the Evaluation, Monitoring and reporting, Policy and plan and Resource tracking indicators reported noteworthy progress, each registering gains of 4 percentage points or more in the "meets requirements" and "exceeds requirements" categories. Evaluation, historically one of the weakest performance areas, achieved a significant gain of 14 percentage points in both categories.

25. The Evaluation indicator has doubled since 2012. Currently, 72 per cent of entities (31) meet and/or exceed requirements. That progress may be attributable, in part, to the adoption of human rights and gender equality as a stand-alone norm by the United Nations Evaluation Group in 2016.[9] Virtually all entities reporting against the Evaluation indicator have integrated gender equality dimensions into their evaluation policies, quality assurance mechanisms and capacity development initiatives. Support from United Nations Evaluation Group Help Desk for the Evaluation indicator and exchanges facilitated through the working group on human rights and gender equality within the United Nations Evaluation Group contributed to progress.

26. The Capacity development indicator demonstrated significant progress, with 49 entities meeting or exceeding requirements in 2017. That corresponds to an increase of 51 percentage points from 2012 to 2017, from 23 to 74 per cent. The uptake and continued implementation of the UN-Women "I Know Gender" e-training course for non-gender specialists since 2014 likely explains that progress. By February 2018, 32,454 staff of reporting entities had completed the online, self-paced course, nearly twice the number of staff who had completed the course as of March 2016. The course is now mandatory for staff in 31 entities, including in the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat, up from 25 entities in 2016. A number of entities looked beyond implementing mandatory gender courses and evaluated their performance more stringently on the basis of compliance or non-compliance with such course completions. As a result, progress remained consistent, and 74 per cent of all entities met or exceeded requirements between 2016 and 2017.

27. The Policy and plan indicator demonstrated an increase of 4 percentage points from 2016 and an increase of 42 percentage points from 2012, with 82 per cent (54) of all reporting entities meeting or exceeding the requirements in 2017. The majority of policies are aligned to the System-wide Action Plan, establishing a common accountability mechanism and strengthening system-wide coherence. Gender policies and plans are a consistent focus of System-wide Action Plan implementation, as they are responsible for most strongly driving change. On average, the 54 entities that met or exceeded the Policy and plan indicator requirements in 2017 reported a "meets requirements" or "exceeds requirements" rating for 11 of 15 performance indicators. In contrast, entities without gender policies, on average, met or exceeded requirements for only five performance indicators. Further, entities meeting or exceeding requirements for the policy and plan indicator reported, on average, seven

[8] The discrepancy between the percentages for performance assessment and monitoring and reporting in the present section is owing to the omission of "not applicable" ratings in order to present strengths and areas for improvement more accurately (see note to figure IV).

[9] United Nations Evaluation Group, "Norms and standards for evaluation", 2016. Available from www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914.

times the number of "exceeds requirements" ratings relative to the others.[10] The System-wide Action Plan 2.0 offers the opportunity to support the development of the next generation of gender policies and plans that are grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and linked to the gender-related targets of the relevant Sustainable Development Goal(s) within entity mandates.

Areas for improvement: 2017 results

28. As in previous reporting years, Gender architecture and parity, Resource allocation, Capacity assessment and Resource tracking remain the weakest performing indicators.

29. The Gender architecture and parity and Resource allocation indicators remain particularly weak, with less than a quarter of entities meeting or exceeding requirements for those indicators (21 and 24 per cent, respectively). Just over half of entities meet the requirements for the Capacity assessment and Resource tracking indicators (51 and 54 per cent, respectively). Consistently low performance on those indicators from 2012 to 2017 suggests the need for strengthened senior management leadership and, more importantly, additional resources, and dedicated attention to addressing structural barriers to progress.

30. The Gender architecture and parity indicator declined by 4 percentage points from 2016 to 2017, from 25 to 21 per cent of entities (16 to 14) meeting or exceeding requirements. While several entities cited internal promotions and staff departures as reasons, the overall decrease is partly attributable to a stricter application of the gender parity requirements of that indicator (equal representation of women for General Service staff and for Professional staff at the P-4 level and above). The introduction of the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity in 2017 will assist entities in adhering to targets and taking concrete actions to accelerate progress in that area. Approximately 32 per cent of entities (24) aligned their corporate gender parity strategies with the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy. Furthermore, 20 per cent of entities (13) announced additional actions beyond strategy implementation for improved performance to address shortcomings in gender architecture and parity during 2018.

31. Progress was uneven across the three components of the Gender architecture and parity indicator in 2017, contributing to overall weak performance:

(a) *Gender focal point systems*. That component witnessed significant progress from 2016 to 2017. A total of 91 per cent of entities (60) reported having a gender focal point system or equivalent; and 83 per cent (55) reported that they included Professional staff at the P-4 level and above, an increase of 5 percentage points from 2016. Moreover, 84 per cent of entities (56) had established terms of reference for gender focal points, an increase of 8 percentage points from 2016. Further, the percentage of entities in which gender focal points devoted 20 per cent or more of their time to functions related to gender equality increased by 9 percentage points, from 66 to 75 per cent, respectively;[11]

(b) *Equal representation of women at all levels*. In 2017, 80 per cent of reporting entities (53) had not achieved the equal representation of women Professional staff at the P-4 level and above. While entities registered a slight

[10] Entities meeting/exceeding the Plan and policy indicator report an average of 5.8 indicators as exceeding requirements, compared with an average of only 0.8 reported by entities not meeting/exceeding the Plan and policy indicator.

[11] Forty-nine entities.

improvement of 3 percentage points from 2016, slow progress towards gender parity continues, limiting performance against that indicator;[12]

(c) *Adequate resourcing*. Only 29 per cent of entities (19) reported that their gender unit or equivalent was adequately resourced to carry out their gender-related mandates. That represents a slight increase of 4 percentage points from 2016. Persistent weakness in that area undermines efforts to mainstream gender within and across entities.

32. While it was among the weakest performing System-wide Action Plan indicators, Resource tracking nevertheless registered ongoing progress. In 2017, 54 per cent of reporting entities (28) met or exceeded requirements, an increase of 4 percentage points since 2016 and 32 percentage points since 2012. An additional seven entities reported on efforts to adopt resource-tracking mechanisms in the coming year. Despite those commitments, several departments of the Secretariat expressed continued difficulty in the development and implementation of a gender marker due to the introduction of Umoja. The System-wide Action Plan 2.0 will provide support so that entities can improve their performance on indicators in which they lag behind.

D. Remedial action plans

33. The help desk established by UN-Women for the System-wide Action Plan reviewed all reports for quality control and accuracy. The quality of System-wide Action Plan reporting has increased by 6 percentage points since 2016. Remedial action plans for 48 entities, or 76 per cent of all remedial action plans, qualified as adequate, good/satisfactory or better in 2017, which was a marked increase from the first year of reporting in 2012, where only 34 per cent of the remedial plans were considered of good quality and 22 per cent were considered adequate.

34. In 2017, reporting entities identified 101 actions to improve performance in 2018. The areas most targeted for enhanced activity included some of the weakest performing indicators, namely Resource tracking, Resource allocation, Gender architecture and parity and Capacity development. The catalytic indicator of Policy and plan was also specifically targeted for improved performance in 2018. In addition, staff other than the gender focal points or those in the gender unit were designated as responsible for follow-up action in 96 per cent of cases, reflecting an increase of 4 percentage points since 2016 and 11 percentage points since 2012. That highlights the expanding web of engagement and responsibility for gender mainstreaming beyond gender units or gender focal points.

35. Collectively, entities estimated that an additional $20 million would be required system-wide to meet the targets of the System-wide Action Plan. The largest share of resources was required for Gender architecture and parity (27 per cent), followed by Resource allocation (17 per cent) and Strategic planning (11 per cent).

E. Key drivers and lessons learned

36. Since 2012, the System-wide Action Plan has guided the United Nations system in making remarkable progress in mainstreaming gender in all institutional functions and has led to sharper insight into the key drivers of progress on mainstreaming a

[12] Gender architecture and the equal representation of women are two separate indicators in the framework of the System-wide Action Plan 2.0, in an effort to more accurately capture progress in those areas.

gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, including:

(a) *Gender equality policies*. Entities with a gender equality policy/plan meet or exceed, on average, twice the number of indicators of entities without such a policy/plan. Gender equality policies and plans that are anchored in organization-wide priorities, particularly strategic plans, and in results-based management systems enhance senior management buy-in, garner wider support and promote more effective results;

(b) *Senior management accountability mechanisms*. Entities that have gender equality policies/plans and a mechanism in place to ensure senior management accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women are, on average, seven times more likely to exceed requirements for System-wide Action Plan indicators. Accountability for gender equality is best implemented when it targets senior leaders and includes all staff through the integration of appropriate objectives in staff members' performance plans and reviews. Linking performance management objectives on gender equality and the empowerment of women to assessing and building capacity improves compliance, results and support within entities;

(c) *Gender focal point systems*. Entities that have a dedicated gender focal point system that includes Professional staff at the P-4 level or above, written terms of reference and a minimum requirement of 20 per cent of time allocated to gender equality meet or exceed, on average, requirements for one third more indicators than those entities without a gender focal point system. Effective gender mainstreaming is better propelled by a network of focal points across all business functions and beyond gender units;

(d) *Leadership and buy-in*. By exercising bottom-up pressure for inclusive practices in all functions of the entities, global staff surveys have galvanized effective leadership support for gender equality work. Participation in system-wide, highly visible campaigns, such as the International Gender Champions initiative, where commitments are specific, mandatory and frequently monitored, creates healthy peer group pressure among leaders and ignites support for gender equality;

(e) *Capacity-building*. Entities that provide and require gender training for all staff at all levels, including senior managers, meet or exceed more than twice the number of indicators than entities that have no training in place;

(f) *Partnerships and joint initiatives*. In a context of shrinking financial resources, partnerships dedicated to sharing System-wide Action Plan-related knowledge and good practices have sustained or propelled the performance of entities. An active and resourced hub for coordination and coherence is critical for monitoring and communicating system-wide progress based on the progressive development of capacities and functions. Building and maintaining a system-wide network, including staff outside of gender units and working through inter-agency networks, has proven an effective means of ensuring gender mainstreaming and system-wide ownership of the System-wide Action Plan.

F. Next generation of accountability frameworks for gender mainstreaming

United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0

37. UN-Women coordinated an extensive, system-wide consultative process throughout 2016 and 2017 to update the new System-wide Action Plan 2.0, on which

entities will report from January 2019. The new framework underwent two rounds of piloting by 8 entities between May and September 2016, and 10 entities between January and March 2018.

38. The System-wide Action Plan 2.0 further refines existing indicators and anchors the framework within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It introduces three new indicators focused on results and one on Leadership, and expands the accountability framework to encompass system-wide reporting on results linked to gender-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Sustainable Development Goal 5. As it is the first attempt to report on system-wide gender equality results more systematically, the reporting methodology may require further fine-tuning after the first round of reporting in 2019.

39. The successful implementation of the System-wide Action Plan highlights its potential for replicability through the United Nations country team gender equality System-wide Action Plan scorecard and in institutional and sectoral contexts at the national level.

40. In 2017, UN-Women developed a sector-wide action plan for gender equality and the empowerment of women for the water, sanitation and hygiene sector. It is expected to be piloted in selected countries in 2018–2019.

IV. Mainstreaming in operational activities

41. The United Nations development system responds to gender inequality by supporting governments in integrating gender equality into national development and common country programming processes through dedicated gender equality outcomes, as well as through gender mainstreaming in other areas.[13]

A. Promoting an enabling environment for gender equality

42. In 2016, 54 United Nations country teams provided technical support for the formulation of national development plans. The support consisted of collecting baseline data, identifying vulnerable groups and setting targets. More than half of those country teams indicated that they provided support related to Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

43. Support to governments also included promoting progress on globally agreed goals and aligning with international and regional normative standards. United Nations country teams reported on inter-agency efforts to strengthen legal and policy frameworks to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in almost 60 countries. They provided a mix of advisory, technical and capacity-building support to the development, revision, implementation and monitoring of national gender equality policies, including national action plans.

44. In Swaziland, the United Nations country team supported the launch of a national strategy on ending violence, including a costed action plan. The strategy created national and regional networks, involved men in the fight against violence against women and established an essential services package and minimum standards for gender-based violence in emergencies. In Viet Nam, support was provided for the development of the first national thematic project on gender-based violence prevention and response, dedicated to improving essential support services for

[13] Unless otherwise indicated, the analyses and examples in the present section draw from the United Nations Development Group strategic summaries of coordination results for 2017 and 2018.

survivors and preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the workplace and violence in schools and public spaces.

45. United Nations country teams also supported legislative reforms to protect the rights of women and girls through the elimination of discriminatory provisions. In Cameroon, Chad, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malawi, Nepal and Peru, governments amended their penal/criminal codes to end impunity for gender-based violence, decriminalize abortion in the case of rape, ensure greater access to abortion services in specific circumstances, deter early marriage and end the practice of *chaupadi*. In Rwanda, the government, with the active participation of the national gender machinery, restored a woman's right to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave.

46. Efforts were made to align laws and policies[14] with international human rights standards and to mainstream gender considerations in national development plans (Namibia, Mauritius, Somalia) and sector strategies, such as health, especially maternal and child health and sexual and reproductive health and rights (Ecuador, Iraq, Mongolia, Uganda, Zambia), labour/employment (Burundi, Republic of Moldova, Viet Nam) and education (Turkmenistan, Zimbabwe). In Albania, the government integrated gender-related objectives and targets in their midterm budget programming for 2018–2020, allocating $90 million from domestic resources to gender equality programmes.

47. United Nations country teams also supported national efforts to end harmful practices against girls, such as early, forced and child marriage and female genital mutilation. United Nations country teams sensitized more than 8,000 men, women, youth and religious leaders on female genital mutilation/circumcision and child marriage in the Gambia, conducted a qualitative assessment on child marriage in Bhutan, launched a three-year campaign to end female genital mutilation/cutting in Ethiopia, successfully advocated for the outlawing of child marriage in Malawi and Zimbabwe and developed a national strategy on ending child marriage in Nepal and Zambia. Also in Zambia, the United Nations provided support to the Ministry of Gender in the development of a costed national action plan to support a multisectoral response to the national strategy on ending child marriage.

48. United Nations country teams continue to enhance the capacity of governments and civil society to engage with international human rights mechanisms through meeting reporting obligations and in tracking the implementation of recommendations. In 2016, 61 per cent of United Nations country teams supported universal periodic review processes and 73 per cent facilitated government follow-up on the recommendations of human rights treaty bodies to States on human rights issues.[15] In 2016–2017, approximately 50 United Nations country teams reported on their support to governments in meeting their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. That support focused on four broad areas: (a) providing technical assistance to governments to help them implement their reporting obligations under the Convention; (b) building the capacity of and promoting civil society participation, namely women's organizations, in the Convention reporting mechanisms through the submission of shadow reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; (c) drafting a United

[14] Examples include the National Youth Policy (Guyana); a national empowerment strategy and plan for rural women (Tunisia); the National Strategy on Countering Terrorism and Extremism (Tajikistan); the National Employment Strategy (Republic of Moldova); the Marshall Plan against Poverty (Mauritius); and draft legislation on the trafficking of persons (India).

[15] United Nations Development Group, "Lift off: Agenda 2030. Shared results of the UNDG in 2016", 2017, p. 9. Available from https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/UNDG_ResultsReport2016_web_final.pdf.

Nations country team report; and (d) monitoring and following up on the implementation of recommendations and concluding observations.

49. In Cabo Verde, the United Nations country team supported the integration of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women into a national plan for gender equality for 2015–2018 and a national plan to combat gender-based violence for 2014–2018. In its confidential report to the Committee, the United Nations country team in Guatemala recommended, inter alia, elevating the Presidential Secretariat for Women to the level of a ministry, strengthening women's access to justice and to decent work with adequate social and labour protections and reforming the electoral law and the rules of political parties to include gender parity and the inclusion of indigenous peoples.

B. Embedding integrated policy support in common country programming processes to support gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

50. Common country programming processes represent critical entry points for United Nations country teams to deliver integrated support across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development with government and relevant stakeholders. That approach is particularly relevant for the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective and for ensuring the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls across all of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

51. Through common country analyses, United Nations agencies, with national governments and other stakeholders, conduct joint analyses and set priorities for the United Nations development system. Guided by new global minimum standards, common country analyses require a rigorous gender analysis that goes beyond data disaggregated by age and sex to identify and explain the root causes of gender and other inequalities. Such analyses can strategically inform the development of gender-responsive United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

52. In 2016, 70 per cent of United Nations country teams had undertaken a common country analysis for their respective United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, an increase of 9 percentage points from 2015.[16] In preparation for the first common country analysis of Burundi, the United Nations country team convened diverse stakeholders to identify development and humanitarian challenges, generate potential solutions and consider the comparative advantage of the United Nations development system in addressing them. Stakeholders included women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex groups, youth, faith-based leaders and vulnerable populations. In Jordan, the common country analysis included a gender analysis interrogating the underlying causes of social, economic and political disparities between men and women. As a result, the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (2018–2022) of Jordan has a dedicated gender equality outcome, with a specific focus on women's political and economic participation.

53. A United Nations Development Assistance Framework describes the strategic and collective response of the United Nations system to national development priorities and is the basis on which it coordinates and delivers integrated and coherent support. United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks continue to demonstrate an increasing focus on gender equality. Of the 58 Frameworks that

[16] Ibid., p. 20.

commenced implementation in 2016 and at the beginning of 2017, 72 per cent (42) specified gender results at the outcome level.[17]

54. United Nations country teams continued to pursue the twin-track approach to gender mainstreaming in United Nations Development Assistance Framework roll-out processes throughout 2016 and 2017 and in line with new guidance for a new generation of Frameworks in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[18] The guidance acknowledges gender equality as one of three key programming principles of integrated, common country programming. The United Nations Development Group's resource book for mainstreaming gender in United Nations common programming at the country level further supports the prioritization and integration of gender equality issues in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and other common programming processes.

55. While current trends indicate that an increasing proportion of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks feature gender equality as a stand-alone outcome and/or as mainstreamed across all other outcome areas, ensuring that gender equality objectives and targets are systematically mainstreamed in results, monitoring and evaluation and budgetary frameworks is essential. While the Frameworks of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Uruguay and Zambia used different disaggregated indicators (e.g., age, gender, geography), a review of 27 Frameworks in 2016 found that less than half included disaggregated indicators of vulnerable groups.[19] Because data disaggregation is often limited to sex, tracking progress on other forms of intersectional discrimination and inequalities becomes difficult. In addition, gender outcomes are commonly underresourced in budgetary frameworks.[20]

56. Joint programmes enable the United Nations development system to strengthen its integrated support as well as mainstream gender systematically in operational responses in all sectors, across all countries and in partnership with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, especially women's and community-based organizations, feminist groups, women human rights defenders and girls' and youth-led organizations.

57. In 2016, of 371 joint programmes reported, 109 focused on gender equality and addressed issues of gender-based violence, maternal and child health and women's economic participation.[21] Gender perspectives were also mainstreamed in joint programmes on climate change, poverty reduction, food security, social protection, peace, reconciliation and resilience-building initiatives and public-sector reform. That is consistent with past trends in which approximately 30 per cent of the joint programmes focused on gender equality, which constituted one of the most frequent areas of focus.

[17] United Nations Sustainable Development Group Office, information management system, 2017.

[18] United Nations Development Group, "United Nations Development Assistance Framework guidance", 2017. Available from https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017-UNDAF_Guidance_01-May-2017.pdf.

[19] United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office, "2016 United Nations Development Assistance Framework: desk review", 2017, p. 18. Available from https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/53006.

[20] Tony Beck, "UNCT performance indicators for gender equality and the empowerment of women: desk review 2012-2014", prepared for the United Nations Development Group Gender Equality Task Team, July 2015. Available from https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/UNDG-TT-Scorecard-Desk-Review-2012-2014-Final-Report-7-July-2015.pdf.

[21] United Nations Development Group, "Lift off: Agenda 2030", p. 53.

C. Mainstreaming gender across the humanitarian and peace and security pillars

58. More than half of the countries where the United Nations development system has a presence report on natural or human-made crises, conflicts and disasters. However, reporting on actions to mainstream gender in humanitarian and peace and security actions in the strategic summaries of coordination results for 2017 and 2018 remains scant. UN-Women was implementing peace, security and humanitarian activities in 58 countries at the end of 2016.

59. In Fiji, UN-Women supported the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation with regard to co-leading coordination efforts on gender-based violence in emergencies in the aftermath of Cyclone Winston. UN-Women also contributed a gender impact analysis to the post-disaster needs assessment and provided gender-responsive recommendations for recovery partners. With the Ministry of Health of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, UN-Women and the Pan American Health Organization integrated women's needs into the national strategy for prevention and control of the Zika virus, ensuring women's active participation from the most affected areas.

60. In Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal, technical and surge capacity support on gender to humanitarian country teams also increased women's engagement in humanitarian action by incorporating gender equality into humanitarian coordination architecture and building capacity on gender analysis through guidelines and workshops.

61. To increase women's leadership and participation in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation, United Nations country teams supported governments in the implementation of Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, particularly through the development of national action plans for the implementation of Council resolution 1325 (2000) in Kenya, Maldives, Uganda and Ukraine. UN-Women provided vital support to civil society organizations and State actors to develop the national action plan for Kenya, which the Kenyan Government adopted as an accountability framework for the implementation of existing national commitments on gender equality and enhancing women's participation and leadership in public and political decision-making at all levels. In Ukraine, United Nations country teams fostered and strengthened partnerships with women's groups and civil society, and sensitized Parliament on the implementation and monitoring of the national action plan.

62. At the global level, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee updated its gender equality policy and developed an accountability framework to monitor the progress and implementation of the policy. The Committee's Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action seeks to make gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls a core principle of humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

D. Gender capacities of United Nations country teams

63. In 2016, 221 of 990 inter-agency groups that supported the delivery of joint United Nations actions and results focused on Sustainable Development Goal 5.[22]

64. The gender theme groups and results groups on gender of the United Nations Development Group provide strategic policy, technical and capacity-building support on gender to common country programming processes, normative and human rights

[22] Ibid., p. 41.

work, as well as advocacy and communications at the country level. They deliver greater United Nations country team coherence through joint planning and implementation and oversee and report on gender equality results with national counterparts.[23]

65. While a regional evaluation by UN-Women in Europe and Central Asia highlighted the importance of gender theme groups and results groups on gender in strengthening gender mainstreaming and accountability at the country level, it also found uneven technical capacity, a lack of funding and an inconsistent commitment to gender equality as consistent challenges for those groups.[24] That finding corresponds to the generally uneven gender capacities of United Nations country teams. In 2016, almost half of United Nations country teams (64 of 131) reported on actions to enhance staff capacity on gender mainstreaming, while 26 per cent had dedicated gender advisers in place.[25]

66. Ensuring strong gender capacities within United Nations country teams facilitates more gender-responsive common country programming processes and strengthens accountability for implementing gender equality commitments. However, in 2016, less than one third of United Nations country teams had undertaken a gender equality scorecard exercise in the last four years, including the six United Nations country teams that piloted the updated United Nations country team gender equality System-wide Action Plan scorecard.[26] The scorecard uses 15 common indicators to assess the performance of United Nations country teams against minimum standards on gender mainstreaming, which are harmonized with the System-wide Action Plan's standards and build on lessons learned to improve performance and progress on gender-related Sustainable Development Goal targets.

67. At the regional level, United Nations Development Group results groups, including those on gender, provide leadership, oversight and technical expertise linking global policy with operational activities at the country level. For the first time, a statement of collaboration between regional United Nations Development Group teams and regional economic commissions was implemented in 2016 to strengthen regional coordination and coherence support to United Nations country teams. That resulted in a framework addressing the discriminatory effects of extremism against women in Asia and the Pacific, advocacy on women's property rights in Latin America and support for joint operations in Europe and Central Asia for refugees and migrants fleeing Afghanistan, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.[27]

E. Data for evidence-informed, gender-responsive policies and programmes

68. In 2016 and 2017, 25 United Nations country teams reported on partnerships with governments, civil society and donors that supported a range of studies and surveys on different dimensions of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

[23] Ibid., p. 22.

[24] UN-Women, "Coordinating for gender equality results: regional evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to UN system coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Europe and Central Asia", 2016. Available from http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2016/08/coorgenderequalresults-eca-web.pdf?la=en&vs=4654.

[25] United Nations Sustainable Development Group Office, information management system, 2017.

[26] Ibid.

[27] United Nations Development Group, "Lift off: Agenda 2030", pp. 45 and 46.

69. Understanding the prevalence of gender-based violence was an area of particular focus in 10 countries.[28] In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women and the World Health Organization supported the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women and the Lao Statistics Bureau in the implementation of a national survey on women's health and life experiences, which was the country's first survey to focus on the impact of gender-based violence. UN-Women supported an innovative costing study on violence to assist the government and partners with planning and budgeting actions to respond to violence against women and girls in different contexts and sectors. Grenada is undertaking a national prevalence survey on gender-based violence with support from UN-Women and the Caribbean Development Bank, the first country in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States to do so.

70. However, the lack of availability of gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex, age and other factors continues to be a challenge. The failure to prioritize gender equality in national statistical and data-collection systems hampers efforts to design evidence-informed policies and to report on progress.

71. Underscoring the issue, there are no internationally accepted standards for 23 of the 53 global-level Sustainable Development indicators that explicitly reference women, girls, gender or sex. For another 21 indicators, the coverage is low and uneven, although the methodology and data at the country level exist. [29]

V. Gaps and challenges

72. Important progress was made in achieving greater system-wide coherence on and accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women and in mainstreaming gender as part of the coordinated and integrated support of the United Nations development system. However, certain gaps continue to persist, including continued underperformance on indicators related to human and financial resources, which hindered the full achievement of System-wide Action Plan requirements by the 2017 deadline.

73. Gender equality capacities remain mixed and uneven across entities and in terms of development planning, implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Comprehensive and longer-term capacity development approaches are needed, including with regard to gender theme groups and results groups on gender at the country and regional levels.

74. The continued absence of a system-wide, harmonized gender marker to track financial allocations and expenditures for gender equality across different sectoral and thematic areas constrains the ability of the United Nations system to identify investment gaps and commit to specific resource targets. Gender mainstreaming across all policies and programmes can increase finances beyond investments made only in gender equality programming and redress, in part, the chronic, system-wide underinvestment for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

75. Much of the progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women reported at the country level rightly focuses on removing the structural barriers that perpetuate discrimination against women and girls and their unequal legal, economic, political and social status. However, considerable effort is still required to mainstream gender perspectives in common country programming processes to support a gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that

[28] Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Cuba, Ecuador, Grenada, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Namibia and Turkmenistan.

[29] See https://sustainable-development-goals.iisd.org/sdgs-in-focus/SDG5.

addresses, among other things, women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and their limited economic opportunities and access to infrastructure and services, as well as gaps in social protection, in a more comprehensive and integrated manner.

76. Humanitarian responses fall short of consistently accounting for the different needs and priorities of women and girls and do not sufficiently engage women's and girls' leadership and participation in shaping solutions at local and international levels (see S/2016/822, para. 19). The updated Inter-Agency Standing Committee gender policy and accountability framework is a step in the right direction.

77. Limited national data disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age, disability and other intersecting factors continue to constrain the ability of the United Nations system to adequately develop evidence-informed policies and programmes that address inequalities, as well as its ability to review and monitor progress on gender equality targets and goals in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

78. The System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has been a driver of significantly improved institutional performance on and accountability for gender mainstreaming across all United Nations entities. The System-wide Action Plan 2.0 is designed to build on its predecessor's achievements, address deficits and better link institutional performance to gender equality results, representing the first effort to systematically report on system-wide gender equality.

79. Gender equality policies and plans, gender training for all staff at all levels and specific accountability targeting senior leaders and including all staff performance plans and reviews have been specifically targeted for improvement with regard to System-wide Action Plan performance in 2018.

80. The United Nations development system continues to provide and align its support with the interlinked and mutually reinforcing nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ongoing discussions regarding the proposals of the Secretary-General to reposition the United Nations development system to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offer strategic opportunities to further enhance the coordination, transparency and accountability of the United Nations system on gender mainstreaming in order to better support Member States in the implementation of the transformative 2030 Agenda.

81. In that context, the Economic and Social Council may wish to request the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies and funds and programmes, to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Exercise continued leadership and support at the highest levels, including through resident coordinators, for gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes, and promote greater accountability for gender equality at all levels by supporting the full implementation of gender policies, including the updated System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0 and the updated United Nations country team gender equality System-wide Action Plan scorecard;

(b) Ensure enhanced focus on gender mainstreaming and gender-equality results across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by engaging in the system-wide strategic documentation and reporting on the contributions of the United Nations to the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) With the continued guidance and support of the United Nations Development Group, enhance integrated support for gender equality and the

empowerment of women and girls to the next generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks by strengthening normative and operational coherence, including the "leave no one behind" principle, and ensuring a dedicated gender equality outcome as well as the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women across all other Sustainable Development Goal-related outcomes, indicators/targets and budgets. UN-Women, in countries where it has a presence, can guide the United Nations development system in that respect;

(d) Bolster regional and country-level quality assurance processes to ensure that common country analyses and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks are informed by robust gender analyses, and reinforce the cross-cutting linkages of Sustainable Development Goal 5 with gender-related targets of other Goals;

(e) As key drivers of progress, ensure that updated gender equality policies of United Nations entities are anchored in organizational strategic, programmatic and results-based frameworks, including planning and budget documents and evaluation and corporate reporting systems, and are aligned with the performance indicators of the system-wide accountability framework (System-wide Action Plan 2.0);

(f) Invest adequate financial and human resources for gender mainstreaming commensurate with corporate commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and with the gender equality ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(g) Enhance financing for gender equality in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through thematic, coordination and pooled funding for collective, integrated action at the country level to support impact at scale;

(h) Accelerate the development of a harmonized gender marker across the United Nations system to track and monitor gender-related resource allocation and expenditures across all policies and programmes as well as to better measure and respond to resource deficits, including in the context of United Nations Development Assistance Framework common budgetary frameworks;

(i) Assess and address persistent capacity gaps on gender mainstreaming through a range and combination of different measures, such as mandatory training for all staff, including senior managers; linking performance objectives on gender equality and the empowerment of women to capacity-building; strengthening collaboration and coordination among United Nations staff working on gender equality and gender focal points across the development, peace and security and human rights and humanitarian action pillars; and reinforcing dedicated expertise on gender equality at the regional and country levels, including gender theme groups or results groups on gender;

(j) Intensify efforts to achieve gender parity, including through robust implementation of the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity;

(k) Implement normative commitments on gender equality in humanitarian action and in women and peace and security, including through existing gender policies, by increasing the deployment of gender experts, enhancing the collection and use of disaggregated data and strengthening reporting systems for gender equality results in those pillars;

(l) Prioritize the production of gender statistics and data disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors in national statistical systems through increased technical, capacity-building and financial support and through greater intersectoral collaboration towards the high-quality production, analysis and use of gender statistics;

(m) Support, at the request of Member States, the adaptation of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to promote gender mainstreaming and accountability in national institutions, including national women's machineries and those corresponding to sectors linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.